

INSTRUCTIONS
FOR THE
POOR.

S H E W I N G

GOD's Goodness and Love to them ;
and how much it is their DUTY and
INTEREST to serve and please Him.

Intended not only as a Means to promote the
true Benefit and Comfort of the Poor in
general ; but also to remind those of
their Duty, who have it in their
Power to do Good.

By T. GREEN, M.A.
Vicar of Wymefwould, Leicestershire.

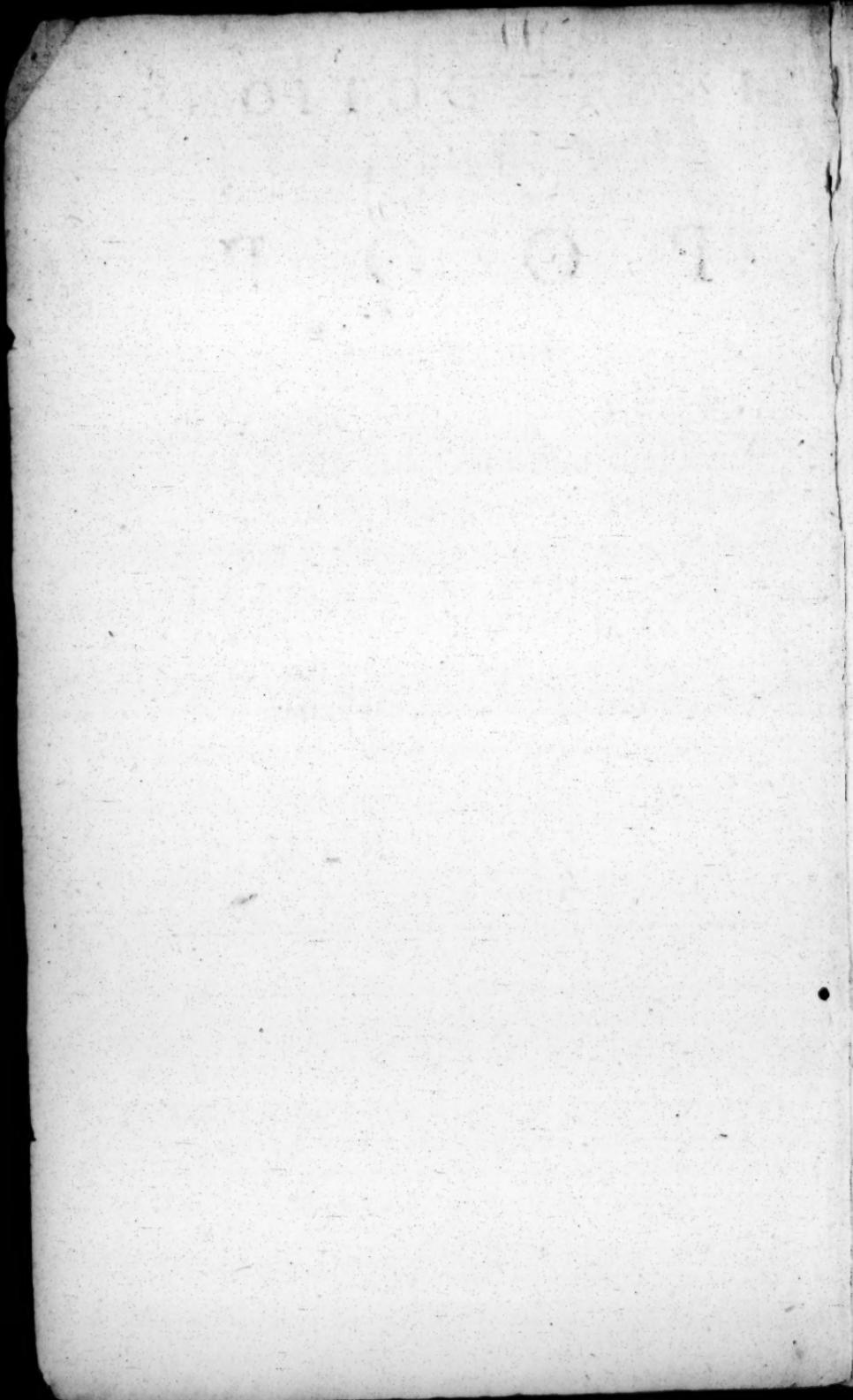
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P R E F A C E ;

O R,

ADDRESS to the POOR.

B EING desired to distribute a *Le-*
gacy of One Hundred * Pounds
amongst the Poor of my parish, I took
that favourable opportunity of calling
them together, in order to impart to them
some proper Instructions; which, as they
were well received, I have made public
(with some additions) for their constant
use, and also for the service and comfort
of the *Poor in general*; hoping that this
Treatise may come into the hands of se-
veral of them by the kind assistance of
those, who perform the duty of Christian
Charity in its full extent, or are concerned
for the welfare of the souls, as well as
bodies of the *Poor*; amongst whom will
be found many, whose spiritual wants are

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* Left by *W. Okeover, Esq;* lately deceased.

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as great as their bodily necessities ; and more particularly amongst such of them as *forget to assemble themselves together* for public Worship ; which neglect makes this kind of application more necessary. Others, though not reduced to Poverty, may receive some advantage from the Directions here offered ; and many of the Observations from Scripture, which declare God's *Goodness* to the Poor, do also remind those of their duty, who have it in their power *to do good.*

As this will be a proper present to all Poor Families, (and very suitable to be given along with other Charities) so will it be of use to all Hospitals, Infirmaries, and Workhouses ; and more particularly to all *Charity Schools*, in order to instill a due sense of duty into the minds of the rising generation ; and thereby prevent vicious habits ; which when once contracted, are not removed without great difficulty.—So that the surest way of advancing the cause of virtue and religion must be by carefully *instructing* those who are young ; or *training them up in the way they should go.*

At a time when Religion is too much neglected by many, amongst *all degrees*

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of men, I should be glad if my weak endeavours might be of any service in promoting it amongst the lower rank of my Christian Brethren, and thereby advancing their eternal well-being.

The design of the ensuing discourse is to keep your minds from being too much depressed by your present low condition, so as to forget God's Goodness and Love to you, and the great privileges you are entitled to by the Gospel ; to put you in mind of the dignity of your nature ; that your souls were created in the image and similitude of God ; and that he hath promised to *crown* you, as well as others, with *eternal glory and honour*, if ye are careful to serve and please him. And I hope the advice here given may be found to be *a word in season to him that is weary*, Isa. 1. 4. or tend to promote your present peace and consolation ; which can be founded on nothing else but a true belief of the gospel, and a suitable practice. And though the Lord give you for a short time *the bread of adversity, and water of affliction*, Isaiah xxx. 20. yet the prospect and well-grounded hopes of an everlasting *Inheritance* in Heaven will make your passage through this world

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much more tolerable and easy, than otherwise it would be. As I have mentioned several things for your comfort and encouragement, so neither have I omitted to put you in mind of the necessity of doing your duty ; giving you a caution against some sins your condition makes you more liable to. I have endeavoured to express myself in a plain manner, to make the advice more useful ; and quoted several passages from Scripture suitable to the subject ; that you may be the more sensible how greatly the Word of GOD tends to your comfort ; and be invited thereby to be diligent in acquainting yourselves with it.



PSALM lxviii. 10.

Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the Poor.

OD's *Goodness* to the children of men is abundantly evident from the general and constant experience which they have of it: to this are owing all the blessings they enjoy, and it is this perfection which renders GOD the object of our love, our praise, and adoration. The holy Scriptures have declared this important truth to us in the clearest terms; "The earth (we are assured) is full of the goodness of the Lord," *Psal. xxxiii.* 5. "He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," *Psalm cxlv.* 9. "His goodness endureth continually," *Psal. lxi.* 1. "He daily loadeth us with his benefits," *Psal. lxviii.* 19.—"God is love," says St John, *1 Epist. iv.* 8.—"To do good," which is the necessary consequence of love, must therefore be essential to his nature: and as there can be no defect in the supreme Being, our reason will inform us, that GOD must be possessed of this valuable excellency in the highest degree, or be infinite in goodness. He created the world, not so much to display his power, as to manifest his goodness; the communicating happiness to his creatures, seems to have been the moving cause to this great work; so that

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they were all originally designed to partake of his divine goodness, though in different degrees. And the author of the book of Wisdom argues very justly, when he says, — “Thou, O Lord, lovest all things that are, and abhorrest nothing that thou hast made; for never wouldest thou have made any thing if thou hadst hated it,” *chap. xi. 24.*

Nay, GOD is kind to “the unthankful and to the evil,” *Luke vi. 35.* he maketh “his sun to rise on the evil and on the good,” *Matt. v. 45.* so that the wicked who are his enemies, do yet partake in many instances of the overflowings of his bounty.—But my design leads me to speak more particularly of his loving-kindness to the Poor.—“He hath prepared of his goodness for the Poor;” which words, tho’ they relate to the extraordinary care which GOD took of the *Israelites*, when they travelled through the barren wilderness, may nevertheless be understood in a general sense, and be applied to the case of the *Poor* at all times. And as some of them, by reason of their distressed condition, may perhaps call in question GOD’s general goodness; and by this means become uneasy in their minds, or less careful in their duty, and be led to murmur and repine, as thinking themselves overlooked by divine providence; I shall in my following discourse,

First, Shew the certainty of God’s Goodness to the Poor, as it relates both to this life and the next; and offer some arguments for their present comfort.

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Secondly, Observe how much it is their duty and interest to serve and please GOD ; and how dangerous a thing it will be to be guilty of a neglect in this great affair.

First then, concerning GOD's *goodness*, or *love* to the *Poor* in this life. As an evident manifestation of this truth, I shall mention a few of the many express declarations in Scripture to this purpose ; we find that GOD hath there strictly enjoined the duty of *Charity* (or *doing good*) upon all, who have it in their power, and enforced it by many inviting promises, and severe threatenings.

As, “ the Poor shall never cease out of the land, therefore I command thee, saith the Lord, that thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in the land ; thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved,” *Deut. xv. 7, &c. Lev. xxv. 35, &c.* — “ Withhold not good, says King *Solomon*, from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it,” *Prov. iii. 27.* — Hence we see, that *doing good* is not a matter of indifference, or a pure act of generosity, which persons may chuse whether they will perform or no ; — but by the law of GOD it is made a debt ; which those, who are able, must carefully discharge ; and they are to look out for proper objects to whom it is most *due*, — so that a wilful neglect of this duty becomes a piece of injustice ; and the Rich are upon this account to be considered as GOD's *stew-*

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ards, and the more they are entrusted with, the more they have to be accountable for.

Charity, or a due regard for the *Poor*, is made a necessary and essential duty of the gospel. “ Charge them that are rich in this world (says St Paul) that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come,” 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. “ to do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices GOD is well pleased,” Heb. xiii. 16.— And this duty is made the proper trial of our love of GOD, “ — who so hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of GOD in him?” 1 John iii. 17.— But there is no argument of so great weight to enforce this duty, and let the *Poor* see how great a regard GOD has for them; as seriously to consider, that our Saviour hath made the *Poor* his *representatives*; or acknowledges what is given to them, as given to himself, — “ I was an hungered, says he to the charitable, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; naked, and ye cloathed me;” declaring that “ inasmuch as they had done it unto one of the least of his brethren in distress, they had done it to himself,” Matt. xxv. 35, &c. And that the condition of the *Poor* might not be carelessly overlooked, he encourages persons to acts of *charity* with the promises of *eternal life*; but denounces everlasting punishment against the uncharitable.

2. God's goodness to the Poor evidently appears by the promise of several temporal blessings to those that *do good*. "He that hath pity on the Poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again," *Prov. xix. 17.* God is pleased to declare, that he stands accountable for that which is bestowed upon the Poor; so that persons by this means make, as it were, God himself their debtor; they lend their money to the greatest advantage, and highest interest; as they have the promises of *this life*, besides a full assurance of being rewarded with eternal *good things* in heaven. God hath promised to bless the charitable in "all their works, and in all they put their hand unto," *Deut. xv. 10.* — "The liberal soul shall be made fat," *Prov. xi. 25.* — "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack," *Prov. xxviii. 27.* — "Give, says our Saviour, and it shall be given unto you," *Luke vi. 38.* Riches are represented by King Solomon, as making themselves *wings*, and *flying away* from the possessors of them, *Prov. xxiii. 5.* now by works of charity they may obtain of God what we may properly call a *heavenly insurance*; it's the best way they can take to secure the possession for themselves, and perpetuate it to their *posterity*. King David had never met with an instance where "the righteous was forsaken, or his seed begging their bread; he is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed," *Psal. xxxvii. 25, 26.* By the *righteous*, in this and many

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other places of Scripture, is particularly meant the charitable and merciful.

Many other blessings are promised, in order to invite persons to *do good*; as *health* and *prosperity* to such as “deal their bread to the hungry, cover the naked with a garment, and satisfy the afflicted soul,” *Isa.* lviii. 7, &c. “Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble, comfort him upon the bed of languishing, and make all his bed in his sickness,” *Psal.* xli. 1, &c. thus will he find support when he has the most occasion for it; and the “blessing of him that was ready to perish shall come upon him,” *Job* xxix. 13.

From what has been observed, we see, that **GOD** has committed the *Poor* to the care of those, who have more plenty of worldly good things. And if at any time they suffer great hardships by reason of their poverty; this is not to be imputed to want of *goodness* in **GOD** (who has provided enough to satisfy the *desire of every living thing*;) but the complaint lies against his *stewards*, who wrongfully withhold what is due to others; or forget to *communicate* out of their abundance to those, whom providence has charged upon them.

3. **GOD** has manifested his goodness, or love to the Poor, by the many gracious promises which he has expressly made to them in his holy word; and by the several benefits they receive at his hands.

The Scripture represents **GOD** as the “*deliverer of the poor and needy*, and him that

hath no helper," *Psal.* lxxii. 12. a "strength to them in their distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat," *Isa.* xxv. 4. "as a Father of the fatherless," *Psal.* lxviii. 5. "a comforter of those that are cast down," *2 Cor.* vii. 6.—as "caring for the poor and needy," *Psal.* xl. 17. "hearing their desire," *Psal.* x. 17. and "standing at their right hand to save them," *Psal.* cix. 31. "filling the hungry soul with goodness," *Psalm* cvii. 9. and "satisfying the poor with bread," *Psalm* cxxxii. 15.—And the better to preserve the Poor from contempt and violence, we are told, "that he who oppresseth, or mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker," *Prov.* xiv. 31. xvii. 5. or affronts **God**, who hath promised to take the Poor under his divine protection.— And their complaints under oppression shall "enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth," *James* v. 4.—he will hear their cry, and *will help them*; and he has threatened to visit with his judgments those, who "oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless," *Mal.* iii. 5.—These, and many other passages of the like nature, may give sufficient assurance to the Poor, that **God** is their powerful friend and *protector*, their kind benefactor and gracious father.

They partake also of many real blessings in common with others: as **God** of his goodness created all things, so does he still uphold, or preserve them, by "the word of his power," *Heb.* i. 3. in him "we all live and move, and have our being," *Acts* xvii. 28. It

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is he who giveth rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, thereby filling our hearts with gladness," *Acts* xiv. 17. "and crowneth the year with his goodness," *Psalms* lxxv. 11.—of his *bounty* in these respects the *Poor* are partakers as well as others.—Thus then your *creation*, *preservation*, and necessary supplies of your lives, are owing to the *goodness of the Lord*; and though you have not *plenty* of all things to enjoy, yet, through the divine love, you have generally "food to eat, and raiment to put on;" and there are none in so low and miserable a condition but have reason to look upon God as their benefactor, for several good things they constantly receive at his hands, and for preserving them from various dangers and calamities.

4. GOD has shewed his *goodness* to the Poor, not only by his positive commands in Scripture, but also by forming human nature in such a manner, as to dispose it to contribute to their relief.—*Benevolence* and *compassion* seem evidently the natural offspring of the human mind, whereby it is inclined to have regard to, and in some measure feel, what happens to the afflicted; taking a secret satisfaction in lessening their misfortunes, and contributing to their happiness. And this virtue will shine forth in the soul, unless it be blinded by self-interest, sunk by gross indolence, or corrupted by vicious habits.—The pleasure which naturally attends *doing good*, was providentially designed to excite persons to it; and there can scarce be any greater delight to a rea-

fonable mind, than (as a pious author expresses * it) “ To enter into a family as an angel of peace, and to leave those in acts of praise and thankfulness, whom we found plunged in mourning and desolation.”

The charitable must be considered as instruments in GOD’s hand for dispensing his favours and bounty to the *Poor*: “ He worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure,” and disposes them to *good works*: so that the poor have often been relieved by the unexpected bounty of persons, whom GOD by his divine influence has excited to such charitable actions. And it must be acknowledged in favour of the present age, that many are inclined to *do good*, or are *ready to distribute to the necessity* of their poor distressed brethren; as is evident, not only by the several charitable benefactions of a private nature, but also by that prevailing disposition of erecting *Charity Schools*, and public *Hospitals*; by which means proper care is taken both of the souls and bodies of the Poor. This must be a comfortable reflection to persons in distress, to consider, that they are not only objects of the divine care, but have also the compassionate regard and assistance of man on their side; and that there are great numbers, who are both able and willing to relieve them, and make it their study to find out the most proper and effectual ways of doing good.—And this employment is not only a necessary, but a ve-

* MR NELSON in his *Address to Persons of Quality and Fortune*, Page 248.

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ry ornamental part of the Christian life;—they who *do good* to those from whom they *hope for nothing again*, are entitled to the honour of being “children of the highest,” *Luke vi. 35.* — and *Job* shined in no part of his character with more lustre, than when he is represented as “a father to the poor, as eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and causing the widow’s heart to sing for joy,” *chap. xxix. 12, &c. xxxi. 16, &c.*

As a farther comfort to the Poor, we may just take notice, that such provision is now made for them all by public Authority, that no one amongst us can perish for want of necessaries, or need be tempted to use unlawful means to supply their wants: they have the laws of man on their side concurring with the laws of *G O D.* — But this provision is not to set bounds to our charity; they who are able must extend it farther, and bring in their *free-will offerings*: proper objects for the exercise of this virtue are numerous, not only public ones but several upon enquiry may be found, who *mourn* in private, and are *afflicted*; whom the charitable Christian will make it his business to find out, and his pleasure to relieve.

Having now considered some few of the many ways by which *GOD* of his *goodness* provides for the bodily support of the Poor; I shall proceed to mention some of the *spiritual good things* which belong to them.

1st, In regard to your souls — They were breathed into you by the same Almighty Power, that *formed the spirits* of the great and

mighty ; and are in their own nature as nearly related to **G O D**, equally valuable, equally immortal. And Jesus Christ the Captain of our Salvation, who is *no respecter of persons*, hath given himself “a ransom for all,” *1 Tim. ii. 6.* Thus there is no difference betwixt one person and another, in their great and chief interests. The way to heaven is as free and open to you as to others ; and the *mansions* prepared for you there (if you love **G O D** and keep his Commandments) will be equally bright and glorious.

2dly, **G O D** has shewed his good-will in a particular manner to you, by declaring, that “he hath chosen the Poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven,” *James ii. 5.* And the Poor are expressly mentioned, as having “the gospel preached unto them,” *Matt. xi. 5.* as was foretold by the Prophet ; “The Poor amongst men shall rejoice in the holy One of Israel,” *Isa. xxix. 19.* — Thus you see, that one great design of our Saviour’s coming into the world, was to declare to the Poor the “glad tidings of Salvation,” and make them partakers of the divine favours. “Blessed, says he, be ye Poor, for yours is the kingdom of **G O D**,” *Luke vi. 20.* — And their low and humble condition, particularly disposed them to embrace the gospel, and become subjects of **G O D**’s spiritual kingdom.

As it was accounted a great blessing to the Poor in our Saviour’s time, to have the gospel preached unto them ; I may just observe,

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that this blessing, by the *goodness of God*, is still continued to you in this nation, where the gospel is preached in truth and purity : And if any have not *the knowledge of God*, it will be *to their shame*,—as “ all may know the Lord, from the least to the greatest,” *Heb. viii. 11.*

3dly, The spiritual improvement of the Poor among us, is very much advanced by the great number of *Charity Schools*, piously designed for imparting *knowledge* to their souls ; which is freely offered them, “ without money, and without price.” — By this means, we hope, there are in most families of the Poor, persons who can read the holy Scriptures, and other *Treatises* published to promote Virtue and Religion ; which, by the kind assistance of several charitable and worthy persons, distinguished by the title of *The Society for promoting Christian Knowledge*, may be purchased at a very small expence ; thereby to encourage pious Christians to give them away, and relieve the *spiritual* wants of their poor brethren. — And christian charity teaches us to be concerned for their everlasting happiness (which as much exceeds their temporal welfare, as eternity does time) to give our assistance, that they may be fed with “ the bread of life ;” be “ covered with the robe of righteousness ; and cloathed with the garment of Salvation,” *Isa. lxi. 10.*

4thly, It may not be improper here to observe, that as by our *Laws* provision is made that the Poor shall not perish through extreme

want ; so also by this method of Charity, they are like to receive much benefit in their religious affairs, by being restrained from *wandering* about. This will prevent several temptations to wickedness, which they would meet with in that way of life : They are by this means also kept under the inspection of their proper Teachers, and come more frequently to the public worship of G o d.— This helps to prevent that gross ignorance in Religion, which too frequently prevails amongst those, who are brought up from their infancy with the trade of Begging, (a manner of life which there is now no necessity to make a common practice of) by which they become, I fear, too often as ignorant and wicked, as they are poor and naked : So that, as the Psalmist expresses it, they are in danger of being “ estranged from the womb ; of going astray as soon as they are born, and speaking lies,” *Psalm lviii. 3.* They have learned indeed the name of G o d, and C H R I S T, in order to move compassion in those they apply to for relief ; but it is to be feared, that many of them know as little of the true nature of the Christian Religion, or our Saviour’s design in coming into the world, as if they did not live under the *light* of the gospel.— That method then of providing for the Poor, which helps to advance their everlasting, as well as present welfare, must be looked upon as a well-designed charity, a great happiness and advantage to them.

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I shall now proceed to offer some farther arguments for the comfort of the Poor under their present circumstances.

First, You must consider, that *Poverty and Riches* are no certain marks either of God's favour or displeasure; so that "no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him," *Eccle. ix. 9.* or, God's love to the good, and hatred to the evil, are not always visible and evident by what happens to them in this life.—This is plain from the case of *Dives* and *Lazarus*, mentioned in the gospel: the one, though forgetful of his duty, had yet a very large share of the *good things* of this world; the other, though religious, had his *evil things*, or a weight of human misery, which very few experience in so extreme a degree. But this mystery of Providence is cleared up by the sudden change which Death immediately made in their respective conditions. The poor man is set quite free from his pain and poverty, and his soul conveyed by Angels into a place of joy and happiness; whilst, on the other hand, the rich man finds himself confined in a place of torment, where the remembrance of his former enjoyments must be an addition to his misery.—The blessed change of *Lazarus's* condition, may be a sufficient comfort to persons in a poor and afflicted state; by assuring them, that if they go on in the paths of Virtue and Religion, they shall by no means lose their reward;—"the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever," *Psal. ix. 18.* but God

will “ provide some better things” for them,— and “ comfort them for the years wherein they have suffered adversity.”— Though they now live in want and obscurity, little known or regarded, yet the time is shortly coming, when it will appear to those who made *no account* of them, that they are “ numbered amongst the children of GOD, and their lot is amongst the saints.” *Wisd.* v. 5.

Secondly, That GOD has suffered his faithful servants to be frequently tried by distress and afflictions in this world, is very evident from many remarkable examples recorded in Scripture; we read of several righteous persons, who had trials of “ bonds, and imprisonments; were stoned, were fawn asunder; who wandered about in desarts and mountains, being destitute, afflicted, tormented,” *Heb.* xi. 36.— What a variety of sufferings did St *Paul* undergo! He was frequently, as he tells us, “ in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness,” *2 Cor.* xi. 27.— But above all, I should mention the great Captain of our salvation, our blessed *Saviour* himself, “ who was a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief:” and tho’ the “ world was his, and the fulness thereof;” yet whilst on earth “ he had not where to lay his head,” *Matt.* viii. 20.— But to the comfort of all faithful Christians, “ he hath overcome the world;” so that even under its afflictions they may “ have peace,” *Job.* xvi. 33.— If they take his easy *yoke* upon them, and “ learn of him, they shall find rest unto their souls,”

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Matt. xi. 29. He came to teach mankind in general to be happy, by such a way as every one has in his own power, if he will follow the divine instructions of his Master. Tho' persons are under sufferings, yet if GOD give them strength to bear them, and afford sufficient comfort under them, they cannot properly be said to be miserable.—Thus St *Paul* declares, we are “troubled on every side, but not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair,”
2 Cor. iv. 8.

It does not by any means follow, from the instances above mentioned, that it is necessary for every good Christian to profess *Poverty*, or be in affliction:—But we learn from thence, that persons in such a condition, are not to look upon themselves as “forsaken of GOD, or faint in the day of adversity,” *Prov. xxiv. 10.*

If indeed in this Life only we had hopes of happiness, there might then be more room for complaint: But this Life is only to be considered as a place of trial and probation; a school, to train us up for a future and more perfect state; a nursery, from which we are to be removed in a short time to everlasting habitations; a station, where we are just built, and fitted up, to be lunched into the immense ocean of eternity.—In whatever condition providence has placed us, we are to perform our part with care and diligence; and the greater trials or difficulties any persons undergo, if they *acquit themselves like men*, and hold fast their integrity, the more glorious

will be the victory, and the greater their reward. Thus the skill of the Pilot is most evident in a storm, and the courage of a Soldier in the field of battle. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried (or approved by trial) he shall receive a crown of life,” *James i. 12.* — Virtue so approved, will yield a present satisfaction, as it has turned the difficulties of this life into so many triumphs.

Thirdly, Though GOD is infinitely good, yet as this life was chiefly designed for a state of discipline, it does not therefore admit of perfect happiness: *Corrections*, or sufferings, may in several cases be instances of GOD’s love, sent either to reform the Vices, or prove and advance the Virtues of men; so that his real kindness to them here shews itself by ordering things in such a manner, as may best conduce to their eternal happiness hereafter. — Heaven is that *Rest* and *Inheritance*, which GOD hath prepared for them that love him; the only place where we are to expect *fulness of joy*, and partake of the absolute *goodness* of GOD in a complete manner.

Persons, who are travelling to take possession of an inheritance, which will afford them a plentiful provision for their whole lives, will not be very uneasy at the indifferent entertainment which they meet with on the road, or the unpleasantness of the country they pass through, knowing that the present inconveniences will soon be over: Nor will they for some short gratifications in their

journey, make over their title, or forfeit their right to the good things they are in pursuit of ; and become as *Esau*, who “ for one morsel of meat sold his birthright,” *Heb. xii. 16.* — In like manner we are represented in Scripture, as *strangers*, *pilgrims*, and *sojourners* on earth ; as having no *continuing city* here, but travelling to take possession of a “ heavenly country, everlasting habitations.” Now the full assurance given in God’s word to all good Christians, of a glorious inheritance in heaven, may make them bear with patience the present difficulties which they may meet with in their passage thither ; and comfort themselves with the hopes of that infinite amends which will soon be made them. By considering that they are not now properly at home, they will learn not to be too anxious about laying up great and lasting stores for the short journey of this life, which they can have no occasion for ; nor will they set their hearts so much upon temporal good things, as to be unmindful of securing eternal enjoyments ; and under any present evils, or calamities, they will remain “ steadfast and unmoveable in their duty, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know, that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord,” *1 Cor. xv. 58.*

Fourthly, This World has not improperly been compared to a *Stage*, or *Theatre**, where mankind have their several parts allotted

* See *Epicetus’s Morals*, chap. 23.

lotted them by divine Providence : So that it is not the Station they are placed in, or the part given them to act, that will gain them the *esteem* of GOD ; but a commendable manner of performing it ; or a proper behaviour, and suitable conduct in that character they bear, whether it be a *high* or *low* one. — As soon as Death closes the scene, and “ the fashion of this world is passed away,” every one will be rewarded according to his respective behaviour. Thus we find the poor despised *Lazarus* (whose “ departure, in the sight of the unwise might be taken for misery,” *Wisd.* iii. 2.) by behaving himself fitly in the low condition he was placed in, gained the divine approbation, and was immediately advanced to heavenly enjoyments ; and being “ a little chastised, he was soon greatly rewarded ; for GOD proved him, and found him worthy for himself,” *ver. 5.* Whilst on the other hand, the Rich man, (though perhaps much admired by the common spectators, who are struck with outward pomp and shew) yet being defective in supporting his proper character, fell under everlasting disgrace, and was cast into a place of torment. — This representation of life lets us see how little reason mankind have to value themselves upon account of riches, or worldly distinctions and superiority, which are all to cease in so short a time ; when the *shadow of death* shall obscure the greatest worldly pomp, and the most “ powerful become weak as others,” *Isa. xiv.*

10.—“ Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me,” *Jer. ix. 23.* and in this necessary knowledge, the *Poor* may glory as much as the *Rich*.

Thus we see mankind are equal in the chief Things, or in their spiritual and eternal interests; and that God values or disesteemeth them, not as they are *Rich* or *Poor*, but as they are good or evil. — The present distinctions cannot outlive time; when this life ceases, they cease with it: And nothing but the effects of our good or evil actions can attend us, when we depart hence.—“ Though one be made rich, and the glory of his house be increased, yet when he dieth he shall carry nothing away, his glory shall not descend after him,” *Psalm xlix. 16, 17.* — As man “ came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he return,” *Eccl. v. 15.* There is no distinction in the grave; “ the small and great are there,” *Job iii. 19.* not to be known from one another by any essential difference, but mixed together in one common heap of matter, till the general resurrection; all reduced to the same rank, as they are children of one common parent, “ by whom came Death.” Happy indeed in their having a joint and equal relation to Him “ who is the resurrection and the life; who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glo-

rious body," in that place where distinctions shall be settled for ever, according to our respective behaviour in this short life.

Fifthly, In the transitory scene of this world, we may observe that there are some parts more difficult to be well performed than others. Upon this view was founded *Agur's petition to GOD*, " Give me neither Poverty nor Riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the Name of my God in vain," *Prov. xxx. 9.* Upon this account, our Church teaches us to pray for deliverance from *danger*, as well in time of *Wealth* or *Prosperity*, as in time of *Tribulation*.

Riches are indeed by no means hurtful in themselves, it is only the abuse of them that makes them become so. *GOD* for wise purposes hath appointed different conditions amongst men.—" He maketh Rich, and lifteth up," *1 Sam. ii. 7.*—And they who " are rich in this world, may also be rich in good works, and lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come," *1 Tim. vi. 17.* Persons of superior Rank and Fortune have it in their power more than others, to be highly useful both to the bodies and souls of men, by their charitable actions and good examples; and become as *shining lights* set up to direct those below in the paths of their duty, and induce them to *glorify their Father which is in heaven*. By *well-doing* they may perpetuate their felicity, but with infinite

refinements ; (as the choicest enjoyments of this life scarce bear any proportion to the perfect joys of heaven;) exchange their large possessions for an “ eternal inheritance;” their worldly honours for “ a crown of glory that fadeth not away;” their pleasant dwelling-places on earth, for *mansions* in heaven, for “ a city, whose builder and maker is God,” *Heb. xi. 10.* finished by the infinite wisdom of an almighty hand ; concerning the beauties of which place, so many glorious things are spoken in the word of God. — And instead of the praise and applause of men, they may secure to themselves immortal honour, become “ the children of the Highest,” and shine in a superior sphere, “ as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever,” *Dan. xiii. 3.*

But my business at present is not to give directions for the religious conduct of the Rich and Great *, but of the *Poor* and *Necessitous* : — You then are called to a trial of a quite different nature ; but though Poverty has its several temptations, yet is it not in itself the necessary occasion of any evil. — You must carefully guard against those dangers you are most liable to. — You have the divine assistance to enable you to withstand

* This hath been excellently done by the pious and learned *Robert Nelson*, Esq; in his *Address to Persons of Quality and Estate* : And it is much to be wished, that this book was in the hands of all those to whom it is addressed. The mentioning of it here will not be reckoned improper, as one great design of it was to promote the *Good* of the *Poor*, as well as the eternal *Interest* of the *Rich*.

the temptations which your Condition throws in your way; and your reward will be the more increased by resisting them: You may be as "rich in Faith" as any others, and have ability "to work out your Salvation," and obtain a glorious inheritance in the next world.

Sixtly, As we are not to judge of God's love or hatred to the sons of men, by looking only on the Good and Evil which happen to them in this world; we must therefore take this life and the next into the account, before we can make a true estimate. And upon a due representation of the whole, what a short and almost imperceptible part of our being, will the longest continuance here on earth appear to be, when compared with our future duration? Our life is represented in Scripture as a *vapour*, a *shadow*, a *span*, as the *grass* and *flower of the field*; to put us in mind how inconsiderable it is, comparatively speaking, even as nothing, in respect of eternity. The author of the Book of *Wisdom* describes the things of this world, as "passing away like a shadow; as a post "that hasteth by; as a ship that passeth over "the waves, or as an *arrow* that is shot at "a mark; whose paths are not to be found, "as soon as they are gone by," *Chap. v. 9,* &c.—Such representations of life, and its enjoyments, were designed to teach persons, that if they are in possession of the *good* things of this world, they are not to fix their affection too much upon them, as being of so short conti-

nuance ; but be induced thereby to seek after those everlasting enjoyments which **G O D** hath prepared for them that love him. And if they are under afflictions of any kind, they are not to be much cast down, as their sufferings cannot last long, and are “ not worthy to be compared with the eternal good things” they hope shortly to obtain. Thus “ heaviness may be endured for a night,” upon assurance that “ joy will come in the morning :” Though this life be short, or full of trouble, yet, to the comfort of all religious persons, “ the merciful goodness of the Lord endureth for ever and ever upon them that fear him,” *Psal. ciii. 17.* “ Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,” *Matt. v. 4.* if they make a religious improvement under the afflictions they are tried with. The withdrawing worldly enjoyments may be designed to teach us to pursue more earnestly our spiritual and eternal interests, and “ set our affections on things above.” **G O D** knows what is best for us in this state of discipline ; and we know that “ all things work together for good to them that love **G O D**,” *Rom. viii. 28.* So that there is no condition in which Providence has placed us, but what we may improve to our real advantage, if it be not our own fault.

Seventhly, We may just observe, that if we could weigh all things equally, the Rich and Poor would be found perhaps not to differ so much in the degrees of worldly happiness, as is generally imagined ; and that the

difference oftentimes consisted more in outward shew, than in real enjoyments of life.—Persons in a low condition are free from several cares and fears, discontents and dangers, which the Great, the Wealthy, and the Ambitious are often liable to. Thus the lofty oaks, and stately towers, are frequently struck with lightning, or shaken with the stormy wind and tempest, whilst the humble shrubs and low-built cottage remain secure below.—The great and wise King *Solomon*, in order to keep persons of a low estate from discontent and envy, observes, that “the sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat much or little; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep,” *Eccles. v. 12.* And our Saviour, who best knew what was good for man, (*Eccles. vi. 12.*) assures us, that “man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,” *Luke xii. 15.* or that great abundance was not a necessary ingredient to make up human happiness.—And St *Paul* declares, that “godliness with contentment is great gain,” *1 Tim. vi. 6.*—Thus our present happiness, in many cases, depends in a great measure upon our own prudent and religious conduct; and every one, with proper care, might have a greater share than he generally enjoys.

But supposing that there is a very great difference in the degrees of human happiness and misery, and that these things do not by any means seem proportioned to the respective

behaviour of people in this life ; if the virtuous and good at any time fall under unavoidable hardships and distresses ; — or “ the way of the wicked prosper, and they are happy who deal very treacherously,” *Jer. xii. 1.* — Such instances afford an undeni able proof, that there must be a time and place hereafter, when a *God* of infinite goodness and justice will make a proper distinction between the Righteous and the Wicked ; punish the one, and reward the other. Which great truth is fully declared to us in the holy Scripture : At the day of Judgment all difficulties will be cleared up, that may arise from the unequal distribution of things in this life.

Eighthly, It may not be improper to observe, that if persons bring themselves into Poverty or Distress through their own vices and follies, as by *Idleness, Drunkenness, or extravagancy of any kind*, they must not look on their *Sufferings* as *God's* appointments, and charge his Providence with them, or by reason of their “ own foolishnes fret against the Lord,” *Prov. xix. 3.* The *evil things* that happen to them, are not sent as trials of their Patience and Virtue, but as punishments of their Offences ; or must be considered as the bitter fruit of their own wickedness and misconduct. Thus we read, that “ the Drunkard and the Glutton shall come to poverty ; and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags,” *Prov. xxiii. 21.* — that “ many sorrows shall be to the wicked,” *Psalms xxxii. 10.* — and *Fools*, “ because of their transgres-

fions and iniquities, are afflicted, *Psal. cvii.* 17.—And upon inquiry we shall find, that many of the miseries of this life, are in a great measure owing to such causes ; which is an evident proof of the folly and danger of Sin ; and should make persons sensible of their faults, and by this means bring them sooner to amendment of life.

II. SECONDLY, I shall shew more particularly how much it is the Duty and Interest of the *Poor* to serve and please G O D ; and the great danger of neglecting to do so.

You have no just grounds to hope, that you shall be sharers in the blessings proceeding from G O D's *Goodness*, if you live in disobedience to his commandments. It is not your *Poverty*, but your *Virtue*, that makes you properly objects of the divine care and love : And though the wicked may partake of many of the common benefits of G O D's Providence, yet it is more than they can reasonably expect ; and they may in some measure be continued in the enjoyment of them, and also escape present punishment, for the sake of the Righteous amongst whom they live. Thus the *Tares* grew up with the *good Wheat*, and received nourishment along with it for a time, till Harvest came, when a proper distinction was made. And though this life was designed for a state of trial, and not of rewards and punishments, yet G O D is sometimes pleased even here to manifest his displeasure against the wicked ; and we read

in Scripture, that "many evils and troubles shall befall them," *Deut.* xxxi. 17. that their sins have withholden "good things from them," *Jer.* v. 25. and "God will curse their blessings," *Mal.* ii. 2.—On the other hand,—that "he blesseth the habitation of the just," *Prov.* iii. 33. that "the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth," *Prov.* xi. 31, and "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," *1 Tim.* iv. 8.—Besides, we may observe, that as religious persons are generally most charitable; the Poor, who live in the fear of God, will be considered as the first and most proper objects of compassion.—Thus, the fear of the Lord is wisdom, in regard to the present advantage it brings, as it is the best means you can make use of to promote your present happiness in this life, and avoid many temporal evils and inconveniences; but however, it will not fail to secure eternal enjoyments in the life to come:—whereas wickedness cuts off all hopes of future happiness in all degrees of men.—As the rich man, mentioned in the Gospel, was not punished in a future state because he had received his *good things here*; so neither was Lazarus intitled to a place in Abraham's bosom because he had been poor, or received his *evil things*:—The first, if he had not made a wrong use of what he possessed, might have exchanged temporal enjoyments for eternal ones:—And the latter was comforted after death, not because he was afflicted here,

but because he behaved himself in a religious and proper manner in the condition he was in ; otherwise he might have been miserable hereafter, as well as poor here.—He did not, we must suppose, murmur against divine providence, call in question God's goodness, or use any unlawful means to free himself from his low condition ; but put his trust and confidence in God, hoping that in a short time he should be made partaker of the divine bounty and love ; and that though he suffered in this life, yet in the life to come he should meet with a full recompence ; so that though “ he was punished in the sight of man, yet was his hope full of immortality,” *Wisdom iii. 4.* — God was pleased to order it so, that he should undergo a severe trial, to make him thereby a more illustrious example of virtue, and that he might come out “ like gold tried and refined in the furnace.”—And it is an instance to teach us, that God may sometimes suffer his faithful servants to undergo great hardships and difficulties in this world.

When our Saviour declares, “ Blessed be ye Poor, for yours is the kingdom of God,” *Luke vi. 20.* it is only meant of the *religious Poor*, (and the words might be spoken with a particular view to the distressed condition of the disciples at that time.)—Thus then, by a neglect of your duty, you destroy your title both to God's present and future favour : If in your Misery or Poverty you forget God, he will forget or overlook you, and then are ye Poor indeed ; as having no comfort here,

or hopes of any enjoyments hereafter ; nothing left, but the dismal prospect of *eternal wo.*

For your better assistance in the performance of your Duty, I shall mention some particulars which may be of more immediate use to you in the condition you are in.

1st, You must remember to return thanks to GOD for his goodness and mercies towards you ; for your Creation, Preservation, and all the Blessings of this life ; but more especially for the inestimable spiritual Benefits which belong to you, for the Redemption of your Souls by C H R I S T your Saviour, for the present means of *Grace*, and hope of *Glory* hereafter.— This is but a grateful and necessary return, and what GOD requires at your hands : “ Let all flesh bless his holy Name,” *Psalm cxlv. 21.* “ All ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great, praise the Lord,” *Rev. xix. 5.* As *Christians*, ye must remember “ to give thanks always for all things unto GOD and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” *Eph. v. 20.* “ To give thanks to him, who hath made you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light ; translated you into the kingdom of his dear Son ; in whom you have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of your sins,” *Col. i. 12, 13.*

And as the necessary supplies of life proceed from GOD’s bounty, you must be careful to offer your constant prayers to him for your daily *Bread* : The *Poor* ought to be more par-

ticularly diligent in *waiting upon God*, and beg that he would give *them their meat in due season*; as their whole dependence is more immediately upon him, and they have not much beforehand for their support; nor can they say with the Rich Man in the Gospel, “*Soul, soul, thou hast much Goods laid up for many years.*”—“*When God openeth his hand, they are filled with good; but when he hideth his face, (or withdraweth his common, or customary bounty) they are troubled,*” and are the first sufferers.

Our Saviour gives sufficient encouragement to persons to pray unto God for what they want, or is proper for them; “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your Children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*” *Matt. vii. 7, &c.* not only *spiritual good things*, but such *temporal good things* as are *best* for them.

2dly, As God is the “*Father of mercies, the God of all comfort and consolation,*” *2 Cor. i. 3.* when you are under any trouble or temptation, you must fly to him for succour; beg that the “*cup may pass from you, or that he will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it,*” *1 Cor. x. 13.*—“*That he would comfort and relieve you according to your several necessities, and give you patience under your sufferings, and a*

“ happy issue out of all your afflictions.” — “ Is any among you afflicted, says St James, let him pray,” *Chap. v. 13.* — “ Call upon me, saith the Lord, in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, *Psal. l. 15.* — Our Saviour directs persons “ always to pray, and not to faint,” *Luke xviii. 1.* or not to be tired, if they do not meet with immediate relief — “ If thou faint in the day of adversity, says King Solomon, thy strength is small,” *Prov. xxiv. 10.* — We must not set limits to God’s will and pleasure; but let our prayers and endeavours patiently attend the season thought proper by divine providence, “ be sober, and hope to the end.”

You have many precedents, or forms of prayer, drawn up ready for your use in the holy Scripture, especially in the *Psalms*, (in which book you will find a great many passages that will afford comfort to the distressed) you may say in the words of the Psalmist, “ Bow down thine ear, O Lord, and hear me, for I am poor and needy.” — “ Be merciful to me, and comfort the soul of thy servant, for I will call daily upon thee: shew me a token for good,” *Psal. lxxxvi. 1, &c.* “ In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust, let me never be put to confusion; deliver me in thy righteousness,” *Psal. lxxi. 1, &c.* So may you hope, that the Lord, who is plenteous in mercy to them that call upon him, will answer you in the day of trouble, will hear your prayer, and will help you.” And that God, “ who comforteth those that are cast

down," will comfort you also, 2 Cor. vii, 6, and that you " shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living," or in this present life.

But then in order to make your prayers heard or accepted at the throne of Grace, you must be careful to live in obedience to God's commandments, for " God heareth not sinners," John ix. 31. " If I regard iniquity in my heart, says King David, the Lord will not hear me," Psal. lxvi. 18. " He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law of God, even his prayer shall be an abomination," Prov. xxviii. 9. whereas " the prayer of the upright is his delight," Prov. xv. 8. " He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him, he will hear their cry, and will save them," Psalm cxlv. 19. — Thus if you endeavour to qualify yourselves properly for putting up your Petitions to God, or inforce your prayers by a religious and good life, so may you hope " to be fed," Psal. xxxvii. 3. or be supplied with the necessary provisions of life; and that God " will not cast you off in the time of old age, nor forsake you when your strength faileth," Psal. lxxi. 9.

3dly, As Christians, ye must be careful to discharge the several parts of your holy Profession to the best of your Power, as you find it described in the New Testament; remembering, that you have not any title to the kingdom of heaven by Nature, but by Grace; not as you are Men, but as Christians. By nature man is in a weak, cor-

rupt, and fallen condition ; “ all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God,” Rom. iii. 23. It is then through CHRIST our Saviour that we must hope for Salvation ; and they who are “ without the knowledge of him, are represented as strangers from the covenant of promise, and having no well-grounded hope,” Eph. ii. 12. “ Eternal life, we are assured, is the gift of GOD, through Jesus Christ our Lord,” Rom. vi. 23.

But then the bare name of *Christians* will not secure to us the glorious Privileges and Promises of the Gospel. To a true faith in Christ we must add a conscientious regard to all his Commandments ; and consider, that he became “ the author of salvation only to those that obey him,” Heb. v. 9. Constant diligence and industry are required in order to go on to perfection, and excel in the *Christian calling*, as well as in any other : and though all persons are not obliged to the like application in the pursuit of worldly business ; yet all ranks and degrees of men are equally concerned, to take care that their “ conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ,” and diligently endeavour to *work out* their own eternal salvation. This business no other person can do for them ; and a due sense of Religion cannot be kept up in the mind, unless persons continue in a diligent practice of it, and “ exercise themselves unto godliness,” 1 Tim. iv. 7. Without this care “ men of high and low degree walk in a vain shew, and spend their strength for nought.”

Now, as our Saviour has done and suffered so much for you, as well as for others, in order to redeem your souls, and make you capable of inheriting *everlasting life*; and hath also shewn a particular regard to you in this life, by honouring you with the title of *Brethren*, and making you so far his *Representatives*, as to look upon the *good* done to you, as done to Himself: all this calls for the greatest gratitude and love. You should take all the methods you can to shew yourselves his disciples *in deed and truth*. One thing that I shall more particularly recommend to your care is, your diligent attendance on the public worship of *God*, more especially on the *Lord's Day*; by which means ye will not only better understand your Christian duty, but also publicly distinguish yourselves as members of the Body or Church of *CHRIST*. One day in seven is to be a rest from your labour, but not an idle, unprofitable rest. The day is to be sanctified, or esteemed holy, set apart more particularly for the worship of *God*, and exercise of religious duties. In the Old Testament, that man is pronounced *blessed*, who "kept the sabbath day from polluting it," *Isaiah lvi. 2.* who reckoned it "a delight, the holy of the Lord, not doing on that day his own ways, nor finding or pursuing his own worldly pleasure," *Isaiah lviii. 13.* Christians then cannot think themselves exempt from the same religious care (though they are not tied to that strict rest which the *Jews* were to observe:) They must look upon

the Lord's Day as designed and set apart for promoting their spiritual and eternal interest. And they will certainly incur the displeasure of the *Lord of the sabbath*, who neglect the proper duties of that day ; or perhaps spend it to worse purpose than any other part of their time ; doing their own *pleasure* on this holy day more than on any other day. If persons are to abstain from their ordinary labour, that they may be the better enabled to spend the day in religious exercises ; they are much more obliged to abstain from their diversions and pleasures, which will indispose their minds for things of a serious and religious nature.

The children of *Israel*, we read, were to be severely punished for the breach of the Sabbath. Every one that defileth it " shall surely be put to death. That soul shall be cut off from amongst his people," *Exod. xxxi. 13, 14.* And public Judgments are threatened against the nation upon this account, *Jer. xvii. 27.* Though we live under a milder and more gracious dispensation than that of *Moses*, yet are we obliged to go on to greater perfection in Religion and Godliness than the *Jews* were ; and a wilful neglect of any part of our duty, exposes us to eternal punishment in a life to come. And those Christians who misemploy the Lord's Day, and " forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is," *Heb. x. 25.* cut themselves off from the society of God's Church and People here, and are in danger of being eternally

cut off from the blessed society of Saints and Angels in the world to come.

It is fit and necessary then, that one part of this day should be spent in joining with our Christian Brethren in the public Worship of God, in paying our “vows unto the Lord, in the presence of his people, in the courts of the Lord’s house,” *Psal. cxvi. 18, 19.* The regarding it in this manner, is what all faithful Christians must think themselves obliged to; and they who are unconcerned about this duty, or spend their time idly, whilst others are employed about things of the greatest importance, act quite inconsistently with the character of a *Christian*, and their conduct admits of no excuse. Nor is it enough to appear now and then at the public Worship, just as it suits your fancy or leisure; you must make it a constant practice, unless you have some very necessary reason for your absence. Nor must you think that this *rest* is any real hindrance to you in procuring your *daily bread*: as God has appointed it, He can and will bless your labour the more on the other six days of the week; and if ye employ it otherwise than as He has ordained, your endeavours will rather bring a curse than a blessing: and we are told, that they who went out on the sabbath day to “gather manna, found none,” *Exod. xvi. 27.*

A religious attendance on the *public Worship* will be a good means of lessening the weight of your *poverty*, or affliction, by being there admitted to converse with God,

and come more immediately into his presence; for, “ where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them,” *Matt. xviii. 20*. Here your minds will be filled with comfortable hopes of eternal *good things* to come. And your present low condition will give you little uneasiness, when you have your thoughts employed on that state, where every one in a short time shall be ranked in stations of honour or contempt, happiness or misery, in proportion to their good or evil behaviour in this life, and shall remain fixed in them to all eternity. This *holy rest* on the Lord’s Day may put you in mind of entering into that heavenly and everlasting “ rest, which remaineth for the people of God,” *Heb. iv. 9*. where there shall be “ no more sorrow and pain, but a full enjoyment of those pleasures which are at God’s right hand.” King *David*, we find, when under persecution, represents it as the most grievous part of his sufferings, to be deprived of the *comfort* of going to the house of God. “ My soul thirsteth for God: when shall I come and appear before God?” *Psal. xlvi. 2*.

In other places you are looked upon as of a lower and inferior rank, and perhaps with *contempt*, by persons who judge by outward appearances, and worldly circumstances; but in the *Church*, or *Assembly of Saints*, *Psal. lxxxix. 7*. the *Rich* and *Poor* meet together upon a level; and God, who is the “ Maker of them all,” *Prov. xxii. 2*. and “ no respecter of persons,” is equally attentive to their

prayers. They are now to be considered as brethren joined together in unity of affection, all worshipping the same God, and with *one accord*, and *one mind*, making their common supplications unto Him. They are drawn into mutual communion and fellowship, as they are members of the same *Body*, of which **C H R I S T** is the *Head*, and have the same hopes of being admitted into the blessed society of *Saints and Angels in heaven*; and may in one sense be said to “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” *Eph. ii. 6.* Thus you see how many strong inducements you have to perform this Christian Service; and may be assured, that your prayers and praises are as acceptable at the throne of Grace, as those offered up by the Great and Wealthy; and will ascend without distinction amongst the “prayers of Saints, as a grateful incense to God,” *Rev. viii. 3.* For the same Lord over all is “rich unto all that call upon him,” *Rom. x. 12.* Besides, as a present encouragement to this duty, by a diligent and religious performance of it, ye will become more immediate objects of human compassion and assistance: those who are of ability, will have their hearts more particularly enlarged to their poor brethren, engaged with them in the same pious work; as they are asking for themselves much greater favours at God’s hand. Thus the lame man, who was miraculously cured by St *Peter* at the Temple, attended there to ask alms of such as

came to perform their devotions ; imagining that *Charity* and *Piety* met together.

When *Tobit* is directing his Son to give “ alms according to his abundance,” he puts in this caution, “ but give nothing to the wicked,” *Tobit* iv. 16, 17. As thinking perhaps, that they would make an ill use of it ; or that they might be sooner reclaimed from their sin and folly by such a distinction. Christians indeed, as they “ have opportunity are to do good to all men, but more especially to them who are of the household of faith,” *Gal.* vi. 10. — The unthankful and the evil, when in distress, are not wholly to be passed by ; but the religious poor are first to be regarded : and they whose conversation is unbecoming *the Gospel of Christ*, and who rarely or never assemble themselves with their Christian brethren in public worship, can scarce indeed be said to belong to the *household of faith*.

As to the excuse which some persons make, that they want proper apparel to appear in on such occasions, this is a very weak one, and discovers a secret pride of heart ; if they take care to “ put on Christ,” *Gal.* iii. 27. be “ clothed with humility,” and other Christian graces ; they will have on the *wedding garment*, which will render them acceptable in the sight of GOD, whose favour is the first thing to be regarded : The ornament most valuable in his sight, is “ the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible,” *1 Pet.* iii. 4. or an upright mind and pious affections. Our reason will indeed teach us, that a de-

cent neatness in attire is well becoming those “ who go to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise,” *Psal.* xlii. 4. But persons must carefully beware of all pride upon account of their dress or apparel ; nor value themselves or despise others upon such trifling and inconsiderable differences : for by such behaviour they destroy the proper design of appearing there, and will be reckoned amongst the “ proud, whom God resisteth,” *James* iv. 6. And the same Apostle tells the Christian brethren, how wrong it was to respect persons the more for coming into their assemblies in *goodly apparel* and *gay cloathing* ; or esteem the poor man the less for appearing in “ *vile raiment*,” *James* ii. 1, &c.

4thly, Your condition calls you to exercise the duties of Patience, Contentment, and Submission to the will of God. How remarkable was the pious resignation of *Job*, when he was reduced even to the lowest state of human misery, from the height of prosperity (which must make his trial and affliction still greater;) “ Naked, says he, came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither,” (or to the ground upon which he was just then fallen.) “ The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord,” *Job* i. 20, 21. And this religious behaviour was the means of restoring him again to his former prosperity. “ Humble yourselves, says St *James*, in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up,” *James* iv. 10. He will remove your afflictions,

or else give you strength to bear them, and improve them to your everlasting advantage. As an inducement to Contentment in your condition, you must consider, that GOD governs the world by his providence. Though by nature all are equal, yet are there wise reasons for appointing a difference in their present outward circumstances. "All men are from the ground, yet in much knowledge the Lord hath divided them, and made their ways diverse," *Eccles.* xxxiii. 10, 11. "He maketh poor, and he maketh rich; he bringeth low, and liftest up," *1 Samuel* ii. 7. The different conditions amongst men tend to the better government and order in human affairs: Some are to rule, others must obey, and be ready to perform several necessary offices in life, which contribute to the ease and happiness of those above them; so that they help and assist each other: And by this subordination the good of society is advanced, and its peace preserved. The body politic, or civil society, may fitly be compared to the body natural; which, as the Apostle observes, "is not one member, but many;" differing in office and dignity. GOD having "set the members every one in the body, as it hath pleased him. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you," *1 Cor.* xii. 17, &c. As GOD hath so appointed, that there should be different degrees and ranks in life, for the good of the whole; those placed in

in the lower stations must act with prudence, and due decorum or fitness, in the place assigned them by the supreme L O R D and disposer of all things. They must not be envious at the condition of those placed above them, but behave themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters ; — “ Render to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour,” *Rom.* xiii. 7. and do their duty carefully in that state of life unto which they are called ; not murmuring, because providence did not assign them a higher station in the body. “ Wo to him that striveth with his Maker,” *Isa.* xlv. 9. “ Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus ?” *Rom.* ix. 20. And the Rich and Poor, by a suitable behaviour in their respective stations, will hereafter be made joint partakers of the kingdom of heaven, where there will be a perfect harmony and union of souls. In that “ fulness of joy” which abounds in the presence of G O D, there will be enough for all ; so that there can be no room for envy or uneasiness.

As the Gospel enjoins the duty of Contentment, so does it teach and enable persons to attain this virtue. Our Saviour encourages the Poor to look for *food and raiment* from the hands of their heavenly Father, by directing them to consider his care for the “ fowls of the air, and the flowers of the field : Shall he not much more cloath you ? Are ye not much better than

they?" You must indeed observe the condition upon which the promise is built; " Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things (*viz.* the necessary supplies of life) shall be added unto you." — Therefore, says he, " take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on: Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" *Matt.* vi. 25, &c. As God of his *Goodness* bestows upon man the great blessing of *Life*, he will not deny him what is necessary to support it; but " will give him bread to eat, and raiment to put on," *Gen.* xxviii. 20. When our Saviour says in this place "take no thought for this life," (agreeably to which St *Paul* advises his Christian brethren, to " be careful for nothing;" but in every thing to let their " requests be made known unto God," *Phil.* iv. 6.) people were not hereby forbid to take due care for the necessities of life; only directed not to be too *anxious* about them, or of a " doubtful mind," *Luke* xii. 29 — If they used the proper means in their power for their support, they were not to be distrustful of God's *care and providence*.

The best way we can then take to advance our present happiness is, to copy after St *Paul's* example, who had learnt (by what the Christian Religion taught him) " in whatever state he was, therewith to be content; how to suffer need, as well as abound," *Phil.* iv. 11, 12. " Having food and raiment (says the same Apostle) let us be therewith content,"

1 Tim. vi. 8. And he shews at the same time, the great danger of being too intent upon the things of this world, or resolving at all adventures to have a large share of *them*; and that by such pursuits many "have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows," ver. 10. And he hath not only taught us, that "godliness with contentment is great gain," 1 Tim. vi. 6. but he fully knew, by experience, the sweet delight and lasting peace of mind which it afforded. *Contentment* properly signifies a kind of *sufficiency* within ourselves; it teaches persons to rest satisfied in the enjoyment of such "things as they have," Heb. xiii. 5. to rule their *will*, to keep their appetites and desires within due bounds, not letting their thoughts run out after such things, as in their present circumstances they can have no reasonable hopes of obtaining. And it is a virtue, or steadiness of mind, not to be acquired without a due knowledge and love of God, and partaking of the joys and comfortable expectations flowing from religion. It is not inconsistent with the duty of *Christian Contentment*, for persons to use prudent and lawful means to remove any difficulties they are under, and endeavour to *better* their condition, or worldly circumstances, for their own more comfortable support, and that they may have the pleasure to "give to him that needeth," Eph. iv. 28. But if they fail in the attempt, they are not to murmur and repine; but learn

to "submit themselves to GOD, and say upon all occasions, The will of the Lord be done," *A&ts* xxi. 14. "It is the LORD; let him do what seemeth him good," *1 Samuel* iii. 18. They must not "cast away their confidence (upon account of their present wants or necessities) knowing that in heaven they have a better and an enduring substance," *Heb.* x. 34.

As religion requires a cheerful dependence on GOD, so does it enable persons to preserve it in the worst of circumstances. "I am he that comforteth you, saith the Lord: Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid?" *Isaiah* li. 12. "In the multitude of sorrows that I had in my heart (says the Psalmist) thy comforts O Lord, have refreshed my soul," *Psalm* xciv. 19. St *Paul* bids the Disciples under persecutions and sufferings, "rejoice in the Lord always," *Phil.* iv. 4. And they are encouraged to this behaviour, by being put in mind, that their "conversation, and great expectations, were in heaven," *chap.* iii. 20. How remarkable was the holy confidence of the Prophet, who declares, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; though the fields shall yield no meat, the flock be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the GOD of my salvation," *Hab.* iii. 17, 18.—"My flesh and my heart faileth; but GOD is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever," *Psalm* lxxviii. 28.

The Gospel teaches us to "rejoice in

hope," *Rom.* xii. 12. If at any time we are deprived of the outward blessings of this life, yet are we to comfort ourselves with the thoughts of God's *Goodness*, trusting that in due time he will remove the uneasiness or afflictions we labour under, and will support us in the mean time, if we call upon him for help. So that in worldly affairs, *religious Hope* is a remedy against Despair: In our spiritual concerns, it is an "anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast," *Heb.* vi. 19.

Saint Paul says, We "glory in tribulation? knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience (or a proper trial of our Virtue and Sincerity) and experience hope," *Rom.* v. 3, 4. Thus Christians are taught to *rejoice* even in *sufferings*, as these may be instrumental in promoting the great end of their *Hopes*, viz. *eternal Life*. And a proper behaviour under those trials may give them a good degree of assurance concerning their *future Happiness*. We must observe, that the *work of righteousness*, or obedience to God's commandments, is the only foundation upon which we can build the pleasing *Hope*, and comfortable Assurance of God's favour. — "The hope of the righteous only shall be gladness; but the expectation of the wicked shall perish," *Prov.* x. 28. "The hope of the ungodly is like *dust*, that is blown away with the *wind*, like the *thin froth* that is driven away with the storm, or smoke dispersed here and there with a tempest; but the re-

ward of the righteous is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the *most High*," Wisd. v. 14.

Thus all good Christians may make themselves easy in this life, because they hope to be happy in the life to come. They will not be much discomposed with the storms they meet with, as knowing they will quickly be blown over, and that they shall enter into a joyful harbour at last. And tho' the "waves are mighty, and rage horribly; yet the Lord who dwelleth on high, is mightier." The clouds and darkness they are under, will soon be dispersed by the brightness of that glorious day which will shortly *break* upon them; and this assurance will afford them that peace "which the world cannot give."

Thus a true belief of the Gospel, and a suitable practice, is the best remedy for "those that mourn in Zion (as the Prophet *Isaiah* expresses it) to give to them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," *Isai.* lxi. 3. Which description relates to the Gospel state, and the great blessings that attend it.

5thly, No difficulties or hardships must at any time tempt you to use unlawful or dishonest means in order to remove them. It was part of *Agur's* prayer to God, that he might not fall into "poverty; lest, says he, I be poor, and steal," *Prov.* xxx. 9. This then is a temptation you are particularly to guard against. No persons amongst us can be under any necessity of relieving their wants

by wrong or sinful means ; or “ steal to satisfy the foul when it is hungry,” *Prov.* vi. 30. They may have necessary supplies, either from their own honest industry, or the compassionate assistance of good Christians, who will be ready to help them ; or, if other proper methods fail, they may apply to those who are appointed by the *Laws* to see that the *Poor* be kept from suffering by any extreme want. And if they sometimes meet with hardships for the sake of maintaining their integrity, so much greater is their virtue, and the more glorious will be their future reward ; and their own conscience, in the mean time, will be a kind of perpetual feast : It will comfort and carry them on with a kind of triumph thro’ the difficulties which oppose themselves. “ The work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.” But if persons use wicked means to free themselves from their necessities ; wilfully affront that God from whom all blessings flow ; “ forsake Him, the fountain of living waters, and hew themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water,” *Jer.* ii. 13. and “ cover with a covering, but not of God :” to such we may properly apply the words of the Prophet ; “ Surely these are poor, they are foolish : for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God,” *Jer.* v. 4. By renouncing their dependence on God, they become indeed of all men most miserable : They

can expect little enjoyment in this life, nor can have any hopes of a better condition in that which is to come; so that no state can be more uncomfortable than that of *vicious poverty*. It is your duty and interest then, to set GOD always “ before your eyes; to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long: for surely there is an end, and thy expectation shall not be cut off,” *Prov. xxiii. 17, 18.* You must consider, that “ the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good,” *Prov. xv. 3.* And there is no “ darkness, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves,” *Job xxxiv. 22.* GOD sees the most private wickedness, and will punish persons for it. “ If sinners at any time entice you to join with them in any dishonest practices, consent you not.” If they propose profit and advantage thereby, and say; “ We shall find precious substance, and fill our houses with spoil: Walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path,” *Prov. i. 10, &c.* Resolve to answer them in the words of the Psalmist: “ Depart from me, ye evildoers; for I will keep the commandments of my GOD,” *Psal. cxix. 115.* The following severe denunciation might be sufficient to deter any persons from this evil practice, namely, “ the curse of the Lord of hosts shall enter into the house of the thief: and remain in the midst of it, and consume it,” *Zech. v. 3, 4.* or bring the inhabitants of it utterly to ruin. And this indeed we find most commonly verified. Persons guilty of this sin generally live in a

poor and miserable manner, without any comfort in themselves, or pity from others ; nay, they often bring upon themselves punishment, and a *shameful death*, as the bitter fruit or wages of their transgression ; and what is still more dreadful, without due repentance they will fall under the eternal displeasure of GOD.— And as *idleness* is often a temptation to dishonesty, the Apostle directs persons not to be “ *lothful in business*,” Rom. xii. 11. that “ with quietness they work, and eat their own bread,” 2 *Theff.* iii. 12. “ Let him, says he, that stole, steal no more ; but rather let him labour, working with his own hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth,” *Eph.* iv. 28. GOD commonly gives a blessing to an honest industry ; “ prospers the handy work of the diligent ;” so that they not only oftentimes free themselves from *want*, but even become capable of relieving others.

6thly, You must not be tempted to make use of any *falsehood* in your *words*, in order to free yourselves from any present difficulties ; for such behaviour is highly offensive to a GOD of truth and faithfulness. “ Lying lips are abomination to the Lord ; but they that deal truly are his delight,” *Prov.* xiii. 22. And as Christians, we are frequently admonished in the Gospel to beware of this sin. It will be your wisdom to refrain from it, even in regard to *present advantage* ; for it generally destroys in the end those very designs which persons

would accomplish by it, *viz.* their *profit* and *interest*. When persons guilty of this practice are discovered (as they soon are by those who converse with them) it ruins their character and credit, and people decline dealing with them: If they are *poor*, they will not be trusted; as their word is not to be relied upon (even perhaps when they mean sincerely) because they have been often known to falsify it; and by this means they may be frequently brought to great straits and difficulties. *Truth* is then the safest way people can take to promote their worldly interest; and though contrary practices do sometimes succeed, yet do they often fail, and bring on great inconveniences. So true is the observation of King *Solomon*, “The lips of truth shall be established, but a lying tongue is but for a moment,” *Prov. xii. 19.*

7tibly, In regard to your behaviour, let it be humble and modest. When we consider the imperfection and corruption of human nature, and the short duration of any worldly superiority; it is evident that “Pride was not made for man,” *Eccles. x. 18.* and that *Humility* becometh persons placed even in the highest stations; but it is more particularly suitable to those in the lowest rank of life.—And this behaviour will gain you the esteem and approbation both of God and man.—“Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly,” *Psalms cxxxviii. 6.* “Learn of me, saith our Saviour, for I am meek and lowly,” *Matt. xi. 29.* as knowing

this temper was necessary for the practice of several Christian virtues. And the “poor in spirit (of every degree) are declared to be blessed ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” *Matt. v. 3.*

As to those who are reduced to the necessity of being *constantly* supported by the *Alms* of their Christian brethren, a modest behaviour, accompanied with *thankfulness*, certainly becomes them, and is due to those whom GOD of his *Goodness* has appointed to take care of them in their distress. By this means the proper supplies will be administered to them, as to persons of the same “family ; not grudgingly or of necessity, but with a cheerful and ready heart,” *2 Cor. ix. 7.* Such a conduct will also tend to the interest of the Poor ; as it will help to secure a continuance of that relief appointed by human laws (which are changeable) or increase it, where it is found necessary. And when the poor are relieved this way, or by the private benefactions of charitable Christians, they must employ what they receive in a proper and prudent manner, to necessary and fitting purposes. So may they the better hope for the like favours again ; and that GOD will influence the hearts of those *who have it in their power* to do good.

It may not be improper just to observe, that they who live on the labours and industry of others, ought by no means to be careless or *idle* themselves ; but be diligent in doing what they are able to do : and this will keep them from passing away their time unprofitably,

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or sinfully ; from “ wandering about from house to house (as St *Paul* complains of some *idle* persons) by which they are in danger of becoming *tatlers*, busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not,” *1 Tim.* v. 13. The same Apostle, in order to keep persons from “ walking disorderly and idly, commands, that if any would not work, neither should he eat,” *2 Thess.* iii. 10. They who were able to work, were not to expect maintenance from the labours of others. Thus we see people are obliged, both by duty and interest, “ to labour diligently and truly to get their own living.”

But the poor and infirm should not lose any opportunity of advancing their *eternal interest*: Tho’ their hands be too *feeble*, through age or infirmities, to supply themselves with the necessaries of this life; yet are they able “ to work out their salvation, and labour to enter into the rest prepared for the people of GOD,” *Heb.* iv. 11. to go to **CHRIST**, and “ drink of the rivers of living water,” to which he so kindly invites all, (*John* vii. 37, &c.) and taste of the “ bread of life, which cometh down from heaven,” *John* vi. 33. And if the soul has little or no inclination to things of this nature, it is an evident proof of a great and dangerous indisposition in it. “ My soul, says King *David*, thirsteth for GOD,” *Psalm* xlii. 2. “ Bleſſed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled,” *Matt.* v. 6. The desires of their souls shall be satisfied. It ought to be the particu-

lar pleasure of the Poor, to get an interest in God; who is able to comfort them in their present distress, and hath promised hereafter to wipe away *all tears from their eyes*, and prepare unspeakable *good things* for all those that love Him.

8thly, In regard to your conversation, or common discourse: As all men must give an account to God for every *idle*, or vain, and wicked word "that they shall speak, and be justified or condemned by their words," *Matt. xii. 36, 37.* this should make you "set a watch over your mouth, keep the door of your lips," (*Psal. cxli. 3.*) and be careful, that no "corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth," *Eph. iv. 29.*—How inconsistent then with the character of a Christian is that wicked custom of *profane Oaths* and *Curses*, too common amongst many of the *lower rank* of life, as well as those above them! "Swear not at all, says our Saviour; but let your communication be *Yea, yea; Nay, nay;* for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil," *Matt. v. 34.* Affirm or deny things in your common conversation, without any Oaths or Curses; for such like language cometh of *evil*, or *that evil One*, viz. the *Devil*, as the word may properly be understood. As there can be no temptation to this sin by any profit or pleasure which it yields; it may be looked upon as proceeding more immediately from the suggestion or influence of *that evil One*, and so is a sin of a *devilish* nature indeed. When people let their passions carry them too far,

by which means they are off their guard, and want words to give vent to the violence of their rage; the Tempter watching such opportunities, prompts or supplies them as it were with what they are to say; so that they oftentimes go on fluently in profane language. And this seems to be the case also with many, when off their guard by *drunkenness*, or the violent pursuit of some kinds of gaming and diversions; “Then do they cloath themselves with cursing like as with a garment,” *Psalm cix. 18.* how shocking is it to hear them, perhaps, utter scarce any thing else but profane Oaths! All this may be looked on as a kind of *diabolical inspiration* (the language of *Hell*) opposed to the divine influence of GOD’s holy Spirit, and to every thing that is serious and *religious*. So that in one sense such persons may be said to be *delivered to Satan*, to be under his power, or in his possession; and “the tongue to be set on fire of hell, and to be full of deadly poison,” *Jam. iii. 6.* This wicked practice may be looked upon as part of the *overflowings of ungodliness*, committed out of madness and folly, and done as it were for wickedness sake; and the persons guilty of it should seriously consider whom they hereby reproach and *blaspheme*, and “against whom they exalt their voice,” *Isa. xxxvii. 23.* even against the great GOD of heaven and earth, who “will not hold them guiltless.” If by our words we shall be *condemned*, and by “corrupt communications the Spirit of GOD is grieved,” *Eph. iv. 29.* no kind of words can

be of a more dangerous consequence than those we are speaking about. As this evil practice is highly blameable in all, and admits of no excuse; it is a kind of aggravation of the guilt, for the Poor to profane that holy Name of God, to affront Him by whose bountiful hand they are immediately fed.

Some of these things are mentioned here, rather by way of caution, than as a direct or general accusation: "I speak not this to condemn you," 2 Cor. vii. 3. I would not add to the affliction of any of my poor brethren, by laying to their charge things they are not guilty of: There are several, I do not doubt, who pass the time of their sojourning here in the true "fear of God, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," Titus ii. 13.

I have now pointed out to you particularly some things you are to do, and what ye are to forbear doing; but you are to be careful to perform all other parts of your duty, to "abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good, and endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things." Poverty, or a low condition, does not set persons at liberty from any part of their duty. As God "hath commanded no man to do wickedly, so neither hath he given any man licence to sin," Eccl. xv. 20. "There is no respect of persons with the Lord," 2 Chron. xix. 7. But "he that doth wrong, shall receive for the

wrong he hath done," (whether he be *bond* or free) *Col.* iii. 25. "We must all appear before the Judgment-seat of CHRIST. I saw, says St John, the dead, small and great, stand before GOD," *Rev.* xx. 12. The plea of *ignorance*, or not understanding their duty, will stand no one in any stead now, as we live under the light of the Gospel; where "the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," *Isa.* xi. 9. And Wisdom uttereth her voice publicly, threatening those who "set at nought her counsel, and slight her reproofs, to laugh at their calamity when it cometh upon them," *Prov.* i. 20, &c. Thus you see what an uncomfortable condition all such bring themselves into, through a neglect and contempt of GOD's laws; and if persons oppressed with poverty, live also wickedly, they cannot so much wonder at what befalls them, or reasonably hope for any great share of blessings from that GOD who "hateth all workers of iniquity." They may consider also, that the more Religion prevails in the world, the greater regard will be paid to the Scripture; which is a *divine Charter*, confirming many grants and privileges to them, to make their condition in this life more comfortable, as was observed before. Now if any *human* laws suit our particular advantage, we should act most unadvisedly by shewing a slight or contempt of them ourselves, and by this means bringing them into disesteem, as much as we can, by our own careless practice.

But the most powerful argument to deter people from a wicked life, is the consideration that such a course will bring them into a state of eternal misery. If men are *cast down* by worldly distress or affliction, and their *soul* upon that account *disquieted within them*; though they may hope that their trouble can be of no lasting continuance, and that **GOD** will “lift up the light of his countenance” upon them; this *disquieted* condition should make them consider, how dismal the state of those must be, who are plunged in everlasting sorrow, to whom is reserved the *blackness of darkness for ever.* Which thought should put them upon using their utmost endeavours to escape so dangerous a condition. The greatest sufferings in this life are as nothing in respect to the eternal misery of the *Soul.* “Fear not them, says our Saviour, which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell,” *Matt. x. 28.* or make them *everlastingly miserable.* Who can think of that dreadful state, without coming to a full resolution to secure themselves from it by a conscientious discharge of their duty! Thus you see it is a matter of the greatest importance to take care of the *Soul*, or provide for its eternal safety. “Incline your ear, and come unto me (saith the Lord) and your soul shall live,” *Isa. Iv. 3.*

As **GOD** is the author of *eternal life*, and may give it upon what terms He pleases; if

He had commanded us to do some great and difficult thing, would it not have been our wisdom and interest to have done it? How joyful should we then be, and thankful to God, when we find the way to so much happiness is smooth and pleasant; that his Commandments are not grievous, but his Laws holy, and just, and good; and his service perfect freedom, conducing to the present, as well as to the future good of mankind!

The Poor, one might think, should be more particularly careful to serve and please God, and to secure "that good part which shall never be taken away from them," Luke x. 42. so that after the travel which God hath given them to be "exercised withal, and the few and evil days of their pilgrimage are over, they may come to that rest and inheritance which the Lord hath promised, and have their heaviness turned into joy." And for their present comfort, we may just observe, that Poverty is so far from being any shame or disgrace, that those persons are the proper objects of the love of God, and of all good men; who being under Poverty, or distress of any kind, support themselves by a holy confidence or religious trust in God; and stand like a rock, unmoved, whilst the swelling waves dash against it: who consider their condition as appointed them for wise ends by the supreme Disposer of all things, and therefore behave with a suitable submission and conduct in that station they are placed in; looking up with an eye of faith to those "good things in a life to

come, which God hath prepared for all them that love him ;” and going on with religious courage through this *vale of misery*, supported with the prospect of that *glorious Prize* which is set before them ; hoping that they shall arrive at last at the *heavenly Jerusalem*. where they shall “ hunger no more, nor thirst any more, but be led to living fountains of waters ; where God shall make them drink of the river of his pleasures, and wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Such like thoughts keep their “ souls in patience ; and having nothing, they may yet be said, with the Apostle, to possess all things,” 2 Cor. vi. 10.

To conclude : Let the Goodness and Love of God induce you to serve and please Him : Let the consideration of advancing by these means your present and eternal comfort and interest, prevail upon you to live “ soberly, righteously and godly in this present world ;” and tho’ you have no great share in the *good things* of it, yet remember, that you are intitled to a glorious and *eternal inheritance* in the world to come. If with *Lazarus* you have tasted the *afflictions*, or *evil things* of this life, this sorrowful experience should teach you, as it did him, to use your utmost diligence to obtain the everlasting enjoyments of the next. And they who will not be won over to their duty by these hopes, have sufficient reason to be deterred from sin by the fear of God’s eternal wrath against all those “ who do evil.” As our Saviour, in his state of humiliation here on earth, vouchsafed par-

ticularly to own you for his *brethren*; let it be your study and *ambition* to keep up your interest and acquaintance with Him, by letting your "conversation be as becometh the Gospel: so will he not be ashamed of you; but when He shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with Him, ye shall find yourselves possessed of that honourable title, be included in the number of the blessed children of his heavenly Father, and become heirs of that kingdom, which is expressly promised to the Poor who are rich in faith," *Jam. ii. 5.* As your parts in life are appointed you by divine Wisdom and Providence, strive that ye may *excel* in them, and by that means gain the approbation of the *Almighty*, and be advanced to everlasting honour and glory. As God has *delivered* unto you talents, for the true use of which you must be accountable to Him, say not *in your hearts*, The Lord will not require it; (remembering the severe punishment of the *unprofitable servant*, who having received but *one talent*, hid it in *the earth*, and gained nothing with it, *Matt. xxv. 25.*) but let your duty and interest put you upon improving diligently what you have received; that your great Lord and Master, when he shall come to judge the world, and give to "every man according as his work shall be," may pronounce to each of you, "Well done thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

**A PRAYER for the constant Use of
the POOR.**

O Almighty LORD and most merciful Father, the GOD of all comfort and consolation; who hast promised in thy holy word to take the poor and needy under thy divine care and protection, and hast made them partakers of many blessings in common with others; who hast also of thy Goodness, not only implanted in human nature a disposition to acts of pity and compassion, but hast moreover expressly commanded that those who have it in their power *to do good*, should be willing to distribute to such as are in necessity; which duty thou hast been pleased to inforce by many inviting promises and severe threatenings.— For those evident manifestations of thy love to the Poor, they are bound to offer thee thanks and praise; but more especially for the spiritual and eternal good things bestowed upon them, as thou hast breathed into them immortal souls, and made the way to everlasting salvation as free and open to them as to others.

Grant, O LORD, that I, thy unworthy servant, may have a due sense of those great and inestimable benefits, and may make it my chief business to secure an eternal inheritance in heaven. Teach me to look upon this world as a place of trial, in order to fit and prepare me for a future and eternal state; and enable me to bear with patience the troubles or sufferings which may at any time beset me, and to

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turn them to my real advantage. Seeing that this life is short, and as nothing in respect to eternity, and that the sufferings of it are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be imparted hereafter to all good Christians; let this persuasion support and comfort me in my sojourning here on earth, and keep me steadfast and immovable in my duty. Give me power to withstand those temptations which my condition makes me most liable to. Let no difficulties put me upon using dishonesty in my actions, or falsehood in my words: But endue me with wisdom to fear thee, and look upon thy displeasure as the greatest of evils; seriously to consider thou art a GOD of righteousness and truth, who seest and knowest all things, even the very thoughts and intents of the heart, and wilt by no means clear the guilty. As we must also be called to an account for every idle, or vain and wicked word, make me careful to set a watch over my mouth, so that no corrupt communication may proceed out of it.

And seeing thou hast for wise reasons appointed that there should be different ranks and degrees amongst men, grant that I may behave myself in a fit and proper manner to those who are placed above me; not be envious at their condition, or murmur because providence hath not allotted me a higher station; but be careful to do my duty in that state of life unto which I am called, and by that means obtain thy divine approbation; to make a due improvement of whatever is committed to my trust, remembering the severe

punishment of that servant, who having received but one talent, gained nothing with it.

Let the eye of thy most gracious Providence, O Lord, be evermore over me ; give me such things as thou seest most convenient for me, and teach me to trust in thee at all times, and in whatever state I am therewith to be content ; to seek in the first place thy kingdom and righteousness, hoping that the necessary supplies of life shall be added.

Make me also diligent in my business, working with my hands the thing which is good, and give a blessing to all my honest endeavours : And if things succeed not according to my desires or expectations, grant that I may possess my soul in patience, and upon all occasions say, *Thy will be done* ; be careful to work out my eternal salvation, and endeavour to make myself easy here, with the expectation of being happy hereafter.

I offer unto thee also, O LORD, my hearty thanks for thy Goodness and Love to me ; for my creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life ; but above all, for those great and spiritual benefits which I am intitled to through Christ my Saviour :— And as he became the Author of eternal salvation only to those who obey him, and we must all, both *small* and *great*, appear before his judgment-seat, to give an account of our actions, grant that I may be careful to secure my salvation, by adding a sincere obedience to a true faith, and be enabled by the gracious assistance of the holy Spirit to “ abhor that which is evil, and

cleave to that which is good ; to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, and adorn the doctrine of GOD my Saviour in all things." — In whose blessed name and words I conclude my imperfect prayers, saying,

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

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